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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Open Budget Debate in Congress

1. In an effort to get a better feel for Congressional views on the "open budget," I attended the Senate debate on this issue on June 4, 1974. At issue was a proposed amendment (No. 1369) to S. 3000 (the Defense Appropriations bill) by Senator Proxmire of Wisconsin. The amendment would have had the Director of Central Intelligence submit an unclassified report each year to the Congress disclosing the total national intelligence program budget.

2. Mr. Proxmire's main thrust was that disclosing this figure would do no harm and would instead help Congressmen to do their job more effectively by virtue of their being able to judge what portion of our national resources was spent on intelligence. He stated that no one accuses the Senate Armed Services Committee of endangering national security when it discloses Defense Department budget details and that a similar disclosure of the overall Community budget figure could not possibly threaten national security either. Mr. Proxmire cited very brief excerpts on this subject from Dr. Schlesinger's testimony during his confirmation hearings to be Secretary of Defense and from Mr. Colby's confirmation hearings as well. He also cited the Mansfield-Scott letter of November 1973 (Senate Select Committee on Secret and Confidential Documents) recommending the release of intelligence budget figures to the Senate. Only Senator Hughes of Iowa spoke in support of Mr. Proxmire's amendment.

3. Speaking in opposition were a number of senior senators from both sides of the aisle. The principal debators were Senators McClellan and Stennis with active support from Senators Humphrey, Jackson, Thurmond, and Pastore. Senators

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Goldwater, Young, Cannon, and Scott of Virginia also opposed the amendment on the floor. Their principal line of reasoning was that disclosure of the overall figure was meaningless if the component parts of the budget were not released -- knowing the total figure would not enable anyone to judge whether the amount of money spent was too small, too large, or just right. This, obviously, would lead to requests for details of the budget and that was clearly against the national interest. Senator Thurmond also read into the record the complete text of Dr. Schlesinger's remarks on this subject at his confirmation hearing, which supported this argument. The argument was also made that disclosing the figure would, over several years, reveal trends in intelligence spending that could prove helpful to our adversaries. The point was made that no other country is so open about its intelligence activities as the U.S. -- Senator Pastore, always one with a colorful phrase, offered to "eat anyone's hat on the Capitol steps if the Russians tell us what they know."

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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